



By Ellsworth Davis, Staff Photographer

An eavesdropping device, 1st transmitter no larger than a thumbnail, was shown here yesterday by Jay Tracer, president of Tracer Investigative Products, Inc., a California firm. The receiver fits into a camera-size case.

U.S. Sleuths Take In A Local 'Bug' Show

By Ernest A. Lotito
Staff Reporter

Jay Tracer is in a touchy business. He makes "bugs" without the full means to accomplish his task. The controversial little gadgets that are used for eavesdropping.

For some, "bug" is synonymous with "invasion of privacy," since, strictly speaking, use of the device without Federal Communication Commission permission is illegal.

But the 46-year-old Tracer is from the school that believes more good than evil can come from eavesdropping equipment. He feels "bugs" are invaluable tools in protecting national security and the public interest.

Loses Rights

"I'm against invasion of privacy," he says. "But I feel that if a person is doing something wrong, he has lost his right to that privacy."

"I believe the police have the right to tap telephones if they have good reason to believe that someone is breaking the law," he added. "I don't want a police state, but neither do I believe that you should give a man authority

without the full means to accomplish his task."

Tracer is well aware that his equipment—like a gun—can be used wrongly. But, he says, "It has been used to catch dope peddlers, to break up prostitution rings, to cut down on thefts from stores and warehouses. Believe it or not, it has also been used effectively to prevent bombings."

Come for a Peek

Tracer, who heads the California-based Tracer Investigative Products, Inc., was demonstrating his equipment yesterday at the Twin Bridges Marriott Hotel. Many of those who came for a peek were Government agents, who presumably would get FCC permission before using anything they might buy.

On display were transmitters no bigger than a sugar cube, and receivers about as big as the box the sugar comes in.

"These little transmitters can be placed around a large warehouse that has been plagued by burglars," he said.

"One man stationed centrally can cover a whole complex of buildings."

Tracer showed a transmitter that could be taped inconspicuously in a man's chest cavity and a receiver that looked just like an attache case—when closed.

"A police informant can use this little transmitter to approach a dope peddler," he explained. "Police, a short distance away, can listen and move in when the 'buy' has been made."

A former agent with the Counter Intelligence Corps, Tracer has been manufacturing eavesdropping equipment seven years. He develops other electronic equipment, too, including a swimming pool alarm that sounds off when anything—including children—fall in.